AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Original) Base particles for supporting a surfactant, obtainable by a step of spray-drying a slurry comprising:

(A) a zeolite having an average aggregate particle diameter of 15 μm or less and a variation coefficient of a distribution of an aggregate particle diameter of 29% or less;

(B) a water-soluble polymer;

(C) a water-soluble salt; and

(D) a surfactant in an amount of 5% by weight or less of the slurry.

2. (Original) The base particles according to claim 1, wherein the component (A) is a zeolite having a composition represented by a general formula:

$xM_2O \bullet ySiO_2 \bullet Al_2O_3 \bullet zMeO$,

wherein M is an alkali metal atom, Me is an alkaline earth metal atom, x is a number of from 0.5 to 1.5, y is a number of from 0.5 to 6, and z is a number of from 0 to 0.1.

3. (Original) The base particles according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the component (A) is obtainable by a process comprising mixing an aluminum source and/or a silica source under the presence of an alkaline earth metal-containing compound.

4. (Original) The base particles according to claim 2, wherein a raw material used in the preparation of the component (A) has a compositional ratio such that an SiO_2/Al_2O_3 molar ratio is 0.5 or more and 6 or less; an M_2O/Al_2O_3 molar ration is 0.2 or more and 8.0 or less; and an MeO/Al_2O_3 molar ratio is 0 or more and 0.1 or less.

5. (Original) The base particles according to claim 4, wherein the MeO/Al_2O_3 molar ratio is 0.005 or more and 0.1 or less.

6. (Original) The base particles according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the base particles have a 10-minute cationic exchange ability of 190 mg $CaCO_3$/g or more.

7. (Previously Presented) Detergent particles comprising the base particles of claim 1 or 2.

8. (Original) A zeolite for a laundry detergent, wherein the zeolite has an average aggregate particle diameter of 15 μm or less and a variation coefficient of a distribution of an aggregate particle diameter of 29% or less.

9. (Original) A process for preparing base particles for supporting a surfactant, comprising a step of spray-drying a slurry

comprising a zeolite (A) having an average aggregate particle diameter of 15 μm or less and a variation coefficient of a distribution of an aggregate particle diameter of 29% or less, a water-soluble polymer (B), a water-soluble salt (C), and optionally a surfactant (D) so as to give base particles comprising:

1 to 90% by weight of the zeolite (A);

2 to 25% by weight of the water-soluble polymer (B);

5 to 75% by weight of the water-soluble salt (C); and optionally

0 to 5% by weight of the surfactant (D).

10. (Original) The process according to claim 9, wherein the slurry comprises:

0.5 to 70% by weight of the zeolite (A);

1 to 20% by weight of the water-soluble polymer (B);

1 to 60% by weight of the water-soluble salt (C); and optionally

0 to 5% by weight of the surfactant (D).

11. (New) The base particles according to claim 1, wherein the zeolite is prepared by an embodiment of pulverizing a raw material zeolite.

12. (New) The base particles according to claim 1, wherein the zeolite is prepared by an embodiment of classifying a raw material zeolite.

13. (New) The base particles according to claim 1, wherein the zeolite is prepared by feeding an aluminum source and/or a silica source to a circulating line of a reaction vessel having the circulating line with a mixing device to react the components, while a vigorous stirring is carried out at a peripheral speed of the mixing device of not less than 11 m/s.